

VZCZCXRO2034
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHNT #1665/01 2621109
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191109Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8492
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3277
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9460
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3891
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3756
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1897
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7157
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2043
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0801
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001665

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: GOU SETS ELECTION, CAMPAIGN DATES

Classified By: POLOFF STEVEN PROHASKA FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Central Election Commission (CEC) announced on September 18 that Uzbekistan will hold a presidential election on December 23 and the campaigning will begin on September 21. The GOU intends to invite observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Most observers speculate that one or more strawmen will be put forward to run from one of the officially registered parties. The National Press Center will host a session for diplomats on September 21 on matters related to the election. We are skeptical of CEC claims of the GOU's commitment to an open and democratic election, given that international observers have not judged Uzbekistan's previous elections free or fair. Nevertheless, we would recommend serious consideration of any GOU invitation to participate in an internationally credible election observation mission. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On September 18 at a session reserved for an audience of domestic, accredited journalists, Chairman of the Central Election Commission Mirzo-Ulugbek Abdusalomov announced that Uzbekistan will hold a presidential election on December 23. The presidential election campaign will begin on September 21, and registration of candidates will take place from November 18-23. Abdusalomov stated that any political party or initiative group can put forward nominees, but each must gather at least 300,000 signatures to officially register. (Note: An initiative group must consist of a minimum of 300 people. End note.) The Central Election Commission will start registering journalists to cover the election campaign and to participate in the commission's briefings. Abdusalomov also stated that they would invite observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to ensure an open and democratic election.

¶3. (SBU) The election commission's press secretary, Beruny Alimov, has indicated that no candidates have announced plans to run yet. Most observers speculate that one or more strawmen will be put forward to run from one of the officially registered parties, against expected candidate President Karimov.

¶4. (C) The opposition party Birlik has already announced that it intends to participate in the upcoming presidential

election, according to harakat.net. The leaders of Birlik's Initiative Group of Candidates for Presidential Elections told the Deputy Chairman of the Central Election Commission that they have submitted registration documents for the party to the Ministry of Justice. Birlik and the Central Election Committee have agreed to hold discussions on the issue after the Uzbek Senate adopts a resolution on the election, according to the website. Although Birlik enjoyed a fair amount of support in the early 1990s, it is a shadow of its past self and does not, in our opinion, represent any serious electoral threat to Karimov.

15. (U) The election commission also approved a plan of events for preparing and holding the elections, according to official Uzbekistani press reporting. The GOU will publish lists of election districts including the number of voters and addresses of the district election commissions before October 9. It will also form district election commissions before October 14 and divisional election commissions by November 13.

16. (U) Political parties can nominate candidates only if the Ministry of Justice registered the party at least six months before the announcement of the election campaign. According to the law on election of the President of Uzbekistan, nominations may start 65 days before the election and end 45 days prior to the elections.

COMMENT

17. (C) An Embassy contact has also indicated that a similar, separate session with the Central Election Commission for

TASHKENT 00001665 002 OF 002

diplomats will be held at the National Press Center on September 21, the same day as the beginning of the campaign. We intend to monitor what is said there. The CEC Chairman's statement that each nominee must gather at least 300,000 signatures to officially register is interesting in light of other previous reporting that between 600,000 and 700,000 signatures are necessary. This suggests a possible change in this aspect of the law on elections that would ease the burdensome registration procedures, if the GOU follows through on its rhetoric. 300,000 signatures, however, is still an almost impossible hurdle for any initiative group.

18. (C) Abdusalomov's claim that the GOU is interested in a fair vote and an open election should be considered with a heavy dose of skepticism given that international observers have not recognized Uzbekistan's previous elections as free or fair. Nevertheless, we would recommend serious consideration of any GOU invitation to participate in an internationally credible election observation mission.

19. (C) Now, all are waiting with baited breath for President Karimov's candidacy announcement. Some are waiting for a GOU legal maneuver to address some Uzbek opposition concerns about the legality of the President running for a third term at all.

NORLAND